

Preparing for the worst

By Rev. J.D. Hooker

How do you prepare for a major catastrophe, one that affects almost every facet of our modern civilized existence? That's the question Dave Duffy, publisher of *BHM*, posed to me, and here are my answers.

Water is essential

Take care of the basics first, and the most basic is water. Unless you've got a steady and reliable source of safe drinking water, you don't have anything, and any other preparations won't really help you much.

If you have a well, make certain you have a manually operated back-up pump, along with everything needed to keep it in good repair. If you don't have a well, or other reliable source of drinking water, drill one, or move to where you will have one.

Critical medicines

Next, have a serious talk with your family doctor (who is just as likely as anyone else to have his or her own worries about these matters) regarding any health concerns you might have, especially if any member of your family is on any sort of long-term maintenance prescription, like heart or

blood-pressure medication, insulin, etc. Physicians are able to order prescription medicines in bulk, at prices way lower than you could obtain them, and can locate suitable prescription drugs with long shelf lives. Besides, in talking seriously with your family's doctor, you may find your-

self making a very useful ally should your worries ever actually come to pass.

It's also always a good idea to lay up a supply of veterinary antibiotics and medications, mainly in powdered, pill, and paste form, with nothing that requires refrigeration. Also store some suture materials, needles, and so forth. These are produced to the same standards, and by the same companies, as the medicines you'll find in the drug store, and they can be pur-

chased over the counter at substantial savings at nearly any farm supply store.

Include a few good medical guidebooks in with your first-aid and "emergency" supplies. Suggested titles: Where There Is No Doctor and Where There Is No Dentist, both available from The Hesperian Foundation, P.O. Box 1692, Palo Alto, CA 94302; The Special Forces Medical Handbook, occasionally found at military surplus type stores; The Essential Guide To Prescription Drugs, published by Harper Collins, 10 East 53rd St., New York, NY 10022; A Physician In The House, published in 1963 by Stein Publishing House. This last one's probably out of print, but it is worth searching for in used book stores.

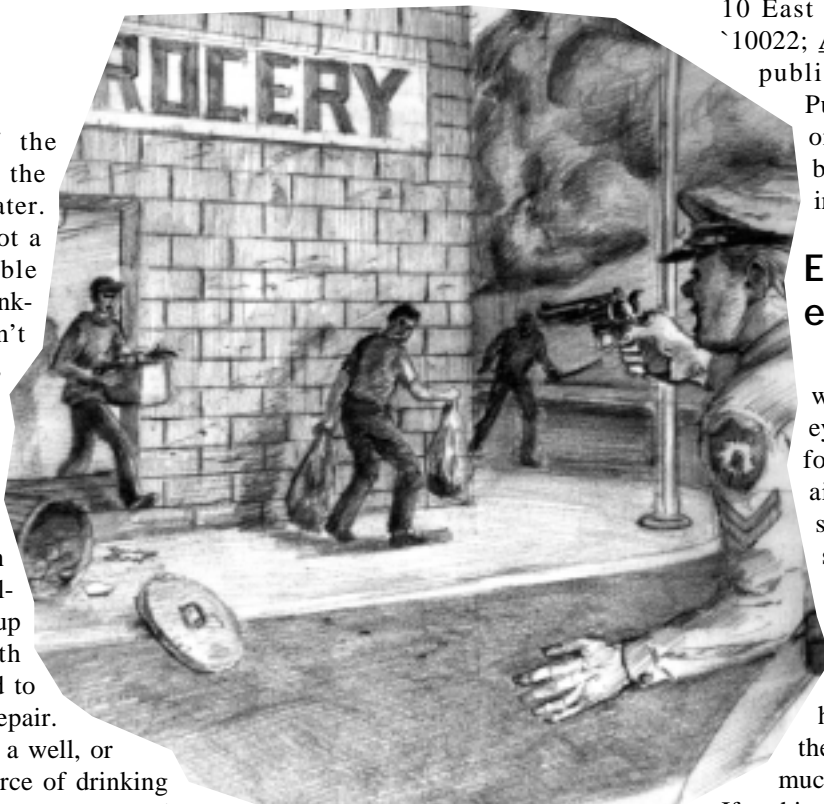
Extra eyeglasses

Next, most folks would do well to consider things like eyeglasses. If you've already found yourself requiring the aid of spectacles, obtaining several spare pair would seem to be an excellent idea. As would saving all of your old glasses should your prescription change, because should anything happen to your newer lenses, these would allow you to see much better than nothing at all.

If nothing else, nearly every one of us will find our eyesight dimming a bit as we grow older, and putting by a few sets of relatively inexpensive non-prescription "reading" glasses can ensure that at least you'll be able to see well enough for close work.

A good rifle

The next thing that I personally feel would belong on the "must have" list of anyone seriously contemplating



surviving a total societal breakdown would be an accurate long-range center fire rifle, equipped with a really good quality fixed power scope, of at least 4X magnification. Also include a good supply of factory made ammunition, along with reloading dies, bullet molds, primers, powder, and so forth for producing more. Most folks would probably be best served in this regard by selecting one of the better military surplus sniper grade bolt action rifles. While it's become rare to find one of the American Enfields or Springfields surviving in their sniper variants in shootable condition, it usually isn't too difficult to locate one of the British SMLE T (T indicates their sniper grade) rifles, or one of the better Mauser models, in exceptionally fine condition.

For my own long distance shooting, I selected a 6.5X55 mm Swedish '96 Mauser, made by Carl Gustaf, as these are renowned for their long-range excellence. This is a long and heavy rifle, and it really isn't much fun to tote around. But with it I've found it's possible to reliably take coyotes and woodchucks at one-half mile ranges. When firing heavier bullets, this same rifle can just as reliably dispatch a large bull or similar sized animal at the same range. I understand that Swedish snipers knew these rifles were effective against soldiers at distances slightly over a mile.

Adequate food supply

Look to your food supply. Though I'm actually a Baptist, I've always admired the Mormon practice of keeping a year's supply of basic foodstuffs in reserve, and our family has always tried to follow this rule.

But you can all too easily run into problems here. A number of self-styled "experts" recommend storing things like flour or whole wheat kernels, powdered milk, sugar, and such in those air-tight five-gallon plastic buckets. We found out a long time ago that this is a pretty foolish idea. Just

try storing such edibles in similar containers, then going away on vacation for several weeks, and see how your "reserves" look on your return. We had chipmunks move in over the summer we were away, and that was the end of plastic storage containers for us. Any other sort of squirrel or rodent is equally certain to chew right through such flimsy storage containers.

Since that time we've relied solely on either metal containers (empty five-gallon lard cans, small metal garbage cans lined with heavy plastic bags, and so forth), or glass jars (such as those one and two-gallon pickle jars which are often available pretty cheaply at Delis and restaurants).

I'm sure that you'll find "experts" recommending nitrogen or carbon-dioxide (dry ice) to further protect your stored foods as well. Yet we've also found this to be unnecessary advice. Instead we've relied on the same method that our parents and grandparents always employed, which is to scatter a few dried bay leaves throughout the flour, sugar, or whatever, to both repel insect type pests and to help preserve freshness. A standard 1 3/8-ounce grocery store package has always been plenty when used to preserve a five-gallon container of flour. The only drawback that we've ever encountered in years of relying on this method is that after about five years or so, the flavor from the bay leaves will have permeated the foodstuff. It's still perfectly safe to eat, but you'll quickly find that you'll prefer making something like spice cake from your flour, rather than plain bread or biscuits.

Open-pollinated seeds

As far as I can see, there are still just a few more steps needed to ensure an uninterrupted food supply. The first would be to obtain a plentiful supply (two years worth) of open-pollinated garden seeds (if society "crashes," those hybrid varieties are gone for keeps.), leaning heavily to nutritious

foods like corn and beans, and prolific producers such as most squash varieties.

As for corn, we've grown to rely mostly on Native Seeds/SEARCH, 2509 N. Campbells Ave. #325, Tucson, AZ, 85719. Not only because they've proven to yield nearly as well in seasons of bad weather as during good years, but also because they can be ground to a fine flour-like consistency, rather than only into coarse meal.

As far as that goes, our hand-cranked "Coruna" steel burr grain mill is much handier than trying to rub the kernels between a couple of rocks. So most folks who don't already own something similar might find this to be a terrific investment as well.

In many cases raising smaller livestock, such as rabbits or poultry, can provide a plentiful meat supply. There are a lot of instances though where this can present more of an open invitation to thievery and predations than most folks could want. So you'll need to consider this pretty carefully.

Some fish hooks

You'll definitely want to stockpile a nice supply of fish hooks, line, and so forth. You'd probably do best to forget about using sport fishing methods as a means of adding to your diet. However, trotlines, set-lines, and such (which I've covered in *BHM* issue No. 40) can bring some real additions to your larder.

Fuel, saws, engines

With these things covered, most folks can sort of slow down a little and look at things like fuel (for heat, light, etc.), tools, transportation, clothing, and, where needed, defensive type firearms.

For a lot of us, wood is already our primary heating fuel, and it can be just as readily put to use for cooking purposes. But I've yet to find a two-cycle chainsaw engine that could hold

together for very long when using alcohol as a fuel, so what happens when your gasoline is gone? So you should consider acquiring an "old timey" one or two-man crosscut saw, and some regular axes. In addition, many other sorts of solid fuel have long been routinely utilized in areas where wood was scarce, including corncobs which really work great in wood-burning cookstoves.

Also, with only minor carburetor tinkering, nearly all four-cycle gasoline engines will run better on alcohol, including regular applejack whiskey. So things like pick-up trucks and rototillers could be kept running for years after the gas stations close. Parts and motor-oil might be a different story however, so you may want to put by a few cases of oil, as well as spare parts like belts, hoses, tires (even used tires), and so forth.

For many different uses, methane gas is a readily home-produced fuel as well, and *BHM* already plans on printing an article on its manufacture so you won't want to miss that. In fact, your collection of *BHM* back-issues might just be your best insurance against any long or short-term catastrophe.

Sewing supplies

Also, in addition to whatever hand tools (saws, hammers, wrenches, shovels, hoes, etc.) you feel might be required to keep your home and equipment running, it's important not to overlook sewing supplies. You know, even without any electricity, the ancient treadle powered "Singer" sewing machine used by my wife and daughters always works flawlessly. Any similar type of machine would make a terrific addition to any household.

Bikes, burros, clothes

Except in extreme cases, where longer distance travel becomes necessary, I'd shy away from most auto-

motive use. Bicycles are one really efficient means of human transportation and their care and upkeep is much simpler than car repairs. Also, their spare parts are more readily stockpiled than truck parts, and used bikes are generally very inexpensive to purchase.

If you've got enough room, and are equipped to care for them, there are a lot of instances where animals, such as burros, ponies, or horses, could also offer tremendous benefits. In addition to saddle uses, these creatures can be relied on to carry equipment, pull plows, discs, carts, and so forth. They also provide manure (both for fuel and fertilizer) and even serve sentry duty.

When it comes to clothing, there sure is an awful lot of quality used stuff on the shelves of most Salvation Army type stores. It probably is possible for just about anyone to obtain a lifetime supply of clothing, bedding, and so forth with very little cash outlay. Remember though that *BHM* regularly publishes articles on everything from making your own wooden-soled shoes and boots to raising and using your own wool. So I really don't feel this to be an issue most subscribers need to spend much time worrying over.

Defensive guns

Once someone has already obtained the long range rifle mentioned earlier, and practiced enough to become proficient in its use, I've always felt that the next thing to look into is a good quality large caliber revolver. Sure, any long gun easily beats any hand gun in performance, but you have to think to remember to carry along your rifle or shotgun, while once your handgun is securely strapped into your holster you can pretty well forget about it until you need it. And remember, whether you're dealing with starving feral dogs, armed mauraders, or whatever else, nothing is dangerous until it's close enough to hurt you.

Should your own circumstances dictate a higher level of defensive capability, it would probably be best to look towards one of the American made pump shotguns next. As I mentioned in an earlier article, there are very good reasons why most police officers reach first for their pump 12 bores when knowingly walking into dangerous situations.

There are situations, especially confrontations with several starving feral dogs, which would undoubtedly become more common after a collapse, where some sort of quick handling, rapid fire rifle is almost a must-have. Unfortunately, I have been forced to become something of an expert in this particular area, and I've found that there really aren't all that many rifles I'd be willing to bet my life on. I wouldn't plan on using anything at all other than the shorter military semi-autos, such as the SKS and the M1 carbines, or one of the tried and true lever guns made by firms like Winchester, Marlin, and Rossi, chambered for pistol caliber rounds. If I could possess only one such rifle though, I'd lean pretty strongly to the lever-action rifle, firing the same shells as my revolver. This has been a proven combination for more than a century.

Of course anyone opting to include any firearms with their gear also needs to obtain a supply of factory ammo and sufficient reloading equipment and supplies for each gauge or caliber of gun.

Now, with all of this already said, let me add one final thought: Like a whole lot of *BHM*'s other readers and contributors, our family long ago reached a degree of self-sufficiency where we don't actually need the products of the society around us. So whether or not the millennium bug, our out-of-control federal government, or anything else destroys civilization as we know it, I'm going out to work in my garden now, and after only a little preparation, it might not be such a bad idea for you to do likewise. Δ